7:Crowder J-5 (1955-1958) 1959
MS37 Senegal MS37

2

The Revolution

OUR bus had been travelling across monotonous scrub country for several hours. The road was excellent, but the journey uncomfortable in the heat of the afternoon sun. The goats on the roof had not stopped screaming since we left Kaolak and the hair of two Mauretanian women sitting in front of me exuded a suffocating odour of rancid butter, with which it was greased, attracting a large swarm of flies. The bus had a drowsy lethargic atmosphere in which we could neither sleep nor think.

After we had been travelling for what seemed an eternity, the skyline was broken by some small hills, covered with lemon-leafed trees. I cannot adequately describe the visual relief those hills afforded. For their significance, they might have been mountains. Towards evening we left these hills behind us and our road quite suddenly came upon the sea, which stretched out before us an undecided compromise between grey and blue. Its shore was skirted by mud huts, from which hung long fishing nets, tied to gaily painted canoes.

There was a sudden stir in the front of the bus. A voice cried: 'Dakar, ici Dakar.' I looked beyond the fretwork silhouette of the fishing village, beyond the cold grey of the sea to an incredible backdrop: a vast city of giant houses, gleaming in the late sun, rode the horizon like some fantastic flotilla of the future.

'Dakar, ici Dakar.' The voice cried once more and the excited passengers took up the refrain.

Our bus pulled up into a large lorry station, in a part of Dakar whose resemblance to the Motte-Picquet-Grenelle suburb of Paris immediately struck me, except that Africans had been substituted for Algerians. At once there was a mad scramble to get

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called 'Les Ballets Sereres du Sine Saloum,' a group of dancers who had won the Territorial Cup in 1957.

The theatre was packed. I was sitting next to an ample Jollof matron, a small child strapped to her back, its tiny nose buried in the pink muslin of her dress. Another child sat on her knee, beturbanned and clothed just like its mother. From the woman's forehead dangled three shining American dollars. Unfortunately a similar Jollof woman sat immediately in front of me, her black horsehair wig and tall tulle turban almost totally obscuring my view. A strong scent of 'Bint El Sudan' manufactured in East London perfumed the room as the curtains rose to the first dance, 'Love and its Caprices', which was to be the theme of the evening. The variations, the programme told me, were to include '*Allo M'Bissine*'—'My fiancée has beaten me because a boy who loves me told me "Hello M'Bissine" ', and later '*Khodia Kha Lola*'—'Why do you cry Khodia? Only the Gods understand what a tear says'. Ending with an initiation dance of future circumcision candidates. One of the most memorable dances was a solo by a woman with a baby strapped to her back, its head swaying backwards and forwards like a punch ball. The child uttered not a murmur as its mother danced into a frenzy, singing at the top of her voice, and in the background a corps of drums beat an hysterical rhythm. It was an entertaining evening, with a beautiful dance of a slight youth, his black-brown body shining sleekly in the glow of the footlights, contrasting with the powdered copper of his lissom partner, a girl of singular beauty with entrancing opalescent eyes.

After the performance there was a cast party to which Faye, the young secretary of the theatre, invited me. The dancers, various guests, European and African, drank bottles of Coca-Cola and orange squash. Amongst them was Ka Abdou Anta.

He was a handsome young man, but he dragged continuously at a cigarette and his teeth were discoloured with nicotine. His jacket, once well cut, was misshapen by papers stuffed into the pockets. My first meeting with Ka had been two years before but we had not been introduced. He was rehearsing a scene from his play *La Fille des Dieux*, which he was producing for the Théâtre du Palais. It was highly symbolic: a somewhat uneasy compromise between tribal metaphysics and the classical French

[9 cont.]

787 After having recited the required prayers, one expresses his particular desire in a whisper while shielding the mouth with the right hand.

Then one lies down in a quiet and suitable place, on the right side, placing the right hand under the ear.

787 278 [791] Drugs and substances: Many drugs are provided for facilitating dreaming, sometimes by the mou'abbirs (who are relatively very rare in Senegal) and sometimes by other experienced persons.

The use of the roots of bakis or of sindiègne (a kind of creeping plant common in the western part of Senegal) is very widespread; if one falls asleep with a toothpick of bakis or sindiègne in his mouth, he will have frightful visions in which demons, the dead, and supernatural beings appear.

The same result is obtained if, before lying down, one takes a solution of salted water in which roots of sindiègne have fermented for quite a long time, the effect of which is both purgative and stimulative.

[302] Among other substances, the extract called kaoulâne (sometimes used in the form of a lotion for the face), liquid myrrh, opium, etc. should be mentioned.

787 [782] More rarely, fumigation is practiced in a sealed and isolated hut, in which honey or incense is burned. Obviously, in this case, the procedure may be completed by one of the above practices.

[778] [789] Magical means: Throughout Senegal (as is well-known) one finds an enormous number of talismans (for example, the khâtim, magical designs made up of names, characters, and figures which possess a kind of supernatural power), the aim of which is to evoke favorable dreams; their form varies according to the desire that the believer wants to realize.

Bohumil Holas

(Ifan, Dakar)

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12 silk headkerchiefs (6 obligatory, valued at 500 to 600 francs each;
12 kerchiefs with "edging" [mouchoirs de "bord"] (6 obligatory, valued at 300 to 375 francs each);
2 silk handkerchiefs;
4 Mauritanian mats, on which the objects are detailed, valued at 500 francs each, and most of all rare, which costs dearly.

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c) Basket of Small Goods. This is a creation of the well-bred man of Saint-Louis, who during the 3 or 8 or 15 days that the nuptials last wishes the guests to be treated well. The young people of both sexes are supposed to crowd into the spacious rooms, suitably decorated and illuminated, and to be "overwhelmed" by the songs of the griots. The husband considers their rejoicings an imperious duty and offers them a basket generally containing several packs of cards, packages of toothpicks, perfume, razor blades, pipes, tobacco, incense, kohéal, fans, tidbits, etc.

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d) The Gifts. These expenses are the final obligations and bear the name of "decorations of castes." As we have noted, since the first visit of the husband, the persons of caste have not officially benefited further from his generosity or from that of his wife. But custom requires that these people be gratified. It should be noted also that the guers have their men of caste who are faithful to them from father to son. In their presence and when they are equal to their task. Whatever their fortune or rank (in the Europeanized society), a guer cannot address any other persons of caste without their permission. Only one coiffeuse arranges the hair of a young girl until her marriage, and one jeweler repairs or makes her finery. The marriage is the ceremony of their dedication and the occasion of proving to them that they have not placed their confidence in vain. These persons comprise two categories: that of the woman and that of the man. Let us note at once that the latter cannot be too demanding without showing a lack of the proper attitude. They form part of the general staff of the husband, and, under penalty

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